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POLAND BEHIND AN AMERICAN SHIELD? POSSIBLE DEPLOYMENT OF THE MD SYSTEM AND NATIONAL INTEREST

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Introduction

There is much to suggest that by the end of 2007 or in the first quarter of 2008 the administration in Washington shall conclude (separate) negotiations with Polish and Czech governments over the construction in southwest Poland of an antimissile base, and of the system's radiolocation station close to Prague. Together, they would constitute one of three launch sites being built as an integral part of the American Missile Defence (MD) system.¹

In accepting the American installation on their territory Poland and its southern neighbour will be making a strategic decision which may bear significantly on their foreign, security and defence policies. The United States concluded that Poland and Czech Republic are the best available location for elements of the system which, according to American data, defend not only the USA, but also Poland, Czech Republic and a significant portion of our continent against missile attacks originating in the Middle and Far East.

The construction of sites in Poland and Czech Republic would commence soon (preparations are underway), and end sometime around 2010/2011. When exactly the final decision will be made to conclude bilateral talks depends on certain domestic political factors in the United States,² but also, increasingly, on the situation in

Poland whose political landscape after the October 21 general election remains uncertain as this is being written.³ Consultations with Poland over the missile shield have been in progress since 2002, with varying intensity, though the Americans made their official offer in May 2006. In late 2004 the Polish government issued directive no. 117, setting up units within the Foreign and Defence ministries to consider whether and in what way Poland ought to participate in the American venture. On May 24 2007 the United States despatched an official invitation to open negotiations with Poland. Witold Waszczykowski, undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became head of the Polish negotiators, with John Rood, US Assistant Secretary of State, leading the American team.

Launch pads housing 10⁴ interceptor missiles (GBI, Ground-Based Interceptors), which may be located on Polish territory would constitute the third of the most important components of the system commonly known as the antimissile shield. Since October 2004 the United States has been deploying interceptors in nine silos on its own territory: in Fort Greely, Alaska, and in California's Vandenberg base, with radar support from a site in Alaska, as well as Pacific based destroyers and cruisers outfitted with the AEGIS detection, tracking, target discrimination

¹ Citations in the present text shall contain several different names and acronyms designating the project, given the evolution of its essence and terminology in the United States, beginning with the Global Missile Defence (GMD) system, through National Missile Defence (NMD), to MD, with the notion of Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) also frequently evoked.

² Following American Congressional elections in November last year, the balance of power in the US Congress shifted, indicating an increased likelihood of the opposition Democrats to come out on top in the upcoming presidential poll. According to high ranking Polish diplomats, the current administration wants to advance work on the system prior to

Republicans' possibly losing control of the White House. Cf. The Republican Party's electoral platform at <http://www.gop.com/media/2004platform.pdf> and <http://www.gop.com/Issues/SafetyAndSecurity>. For the Democrats' stance see <http://www.democrats.org/pdfs/2004platform.pdf>.

³ As a result, Washington has announced detailed consultations with parties which remain in opposition in the run-up to polling day, aware of the fact that Poland may wish to bid up the price for its accepting the deployment of the American system.

⁴ The number reflects American estimates as to how many rockets are necessary to disable 3-4 missiles fired from, say,

and engagement system and SM-3 missiles. All these elements are integrated with command centres in Colorado, Nebraska, Hawaii and Washington, DC. The system's core is supplemented with various ancillary elements, permitting different configurations, including, in principle, cooperation with America's allies, both within NATO and outside that bloc.

Set to take shape gradually over several decades, the system can be described as a multilayered network of subsystems capable—given its proper functioning—of destroying ballistic missiles in different flight stages (boost, ballistic and re-entry), irrespective of where they were launched. The Polish site would permit “knocking out” missiles in the ballistic stage, i.e. in space, some 150-200 km above ground. Measuring just under twenty metres, the rockets deployed in southwest Poland would be equipped not with nuclear warheads but with kinetic energy interceptors, surface to air missiles each weighing about 75 kilograms. Thus, response to a strike—hypothetically involving Iranian Shabab-3, Shabab-4 or Shabab-5 missiles with a range of 2500-3000 kilometres—would be conventional.⁵

Ultimately, existing or future elements, be they fixed or mobile, ground-, sea-, air- or space-based (radars, antimissiles, lasers, communications and command infrastructure) would be integrated into a single system defending US territory, the country's forces and military bases beyond its borders, as well as its

allies' territory and armies (including beyond their borders). There are plans for some one hundred silos armed with rockets capable of disabling missiles coming in from all possible directions. Despite the fiasco of certain tests conducted to verify the system's effectiveness,⁶ since late 2004 the Americans have been redoubling their technical efforts, focusing on defence of US territory. One of the MD system's more important, even crucial premises—also from the Polish perspective—is the fact that it is to constitute an integral part of a future defence mechanism that would protect the USA itself.

The most clear-cut argument in favour of Poland's accepting a strategically significant component of American military infrastructure is the desire to neutralize potential threats, albeit not necessarily from distant states such as Iran or North Korea, but ones which may arise relatively close to our eastern borders, though it remains moot whether, and to what extent, the United

States also anticipate such a threat. One can only speculate whether in future the system will be capable of intercepting hostile rockets homing in on Polish territory from the east, and this appears to be the subject of some serious discussion between Poland and the USA.

The decision regarding the deployment of elements of the American shield will be significantly influenced by specifically Polish thinking in geopolitical terms. At issue is securing additional—besides NATO guarantees—assurance against threats. Poland has been reiterating the argument that locating shield components on our territory, though not

Iran's territory, which that country would be able to launch in foreseeable future.

⁵ Hostile rockets may be hit head on or side on. According to brigadier general Patrick O'Reilly, deputy director of MDA, the kinetic energy released on contact is so great that the resultant heat obliterates approximately 25 percent of the warhead, with the remainder burning out on re-entry into the atmosphere. Some fragments may possibly reach the surface.

⁶ Since 2001, a total of 35 tests have been conducted with 27 successes, i.e. direct hits by the antimissiles in the ballistic or re-entry stage.

aimed at Russia, would nonetheless possess “deterrent” value. For instance, the daily “Rzeczpospolita” quoted general Stanisław Koziej, renowned military strategist and former deputy defence minister, as saying that “if we agree to participate in the antimissile shield, Putin will think a hundred times before deciding to strike Poland.”⁷ This claim illustrates that the purpose of and justification for Polish involvement in this initiative does not derive solely from the latter’s role in and intercepting missiles belonging to “rogue” states, but possibly also from more direct threats to Poland’s defence and security.

At the outset, any analysis of the antimissile shield’s importance to Poland must allow that:

- The shape and assumptions of the project, were it to be implemented, are constantly subject to evolution, depending on external and internal political or military conditions in the United States, and on modifications to its actual structure, its technical parameters and financial considerations. This means that in advance it is impossible to aptly and unequivocally assess the interrelations between MD, American engagement in European—and specifically, Polish—affairs, and our security at each phase in the project’s development. Therefore perceptions thereof may easily lead to certain misunderstandings;
- Ultimately, the system is supposed to protect America’s allies, though its initial and absolute priority is to defend the territory and interests of the United

States. As such, it is difficult to claim that in the foreseeable future the system could be used to defend Polish territory in any direct manner, though the Americans insist that MD is to protect Poland. However, system elements located on Polish territory could deter, or—according to others—attract a hostile strike. Still, its integral link to the US national defence system may suggest that it would indirectly augment, rather than diminish Polish security.

Given the American antimissile system’s importance to the global dimension of international relations in the long term, cooperating with the United States would entail lasting implications, both positive and negative, for our country’s defence and security. However, the question of whether or not building shield elements on Polish territory is justified has not as yet received a clear answer.

Poland faces its most important decision since entering NATO in 1999 and sending troops to Iraq (2003), and the first permanent deployment of foreign forces on its territory since Russian withdrawal in 1983 (though admittedly, the American’s minimal numbers and disparate political role make any comparisons gratuitous). In agreeing to deploy elements of the shield (and President Lech Kaczyński’s assertion that this is “practically settled” may be treated as evidence of such agreement)⁸ would be making a strategic choice—both due to the nature of the planned installations, which are to facilitate the overriding and universal task before contemporary security policy, to wit combating

⁷ *Rzeczpospolita*, April 11, 2006.

⁸ *Dziennik*, July 17, 2007.

terrorism with missile-based weapons, as well as to the repercussions of tying its security with that of America in much more direct a way than through NATO. Author of one analysis aptly noted that “the final decision on this issue will constitute a strategic choice which shall determine Poland’s future place on the international arena, shape its relations with the United States, European partners within NATO and the EU, and with its eastern neighbours. The type and range of consequences that Poland will bear as a result of participating in the shield project will primarily depend on the content of American proposals and on whether Poland’s role in the system shall be active or passive, and if the former, then to what extent.”⁹ In any event, it ought to be borne in mind that pulling out of a project which has already entered implementation stage would be difficult to imagine, for political and military-technical reasons. At the same time there is always the possibility that the American antimissile system, currently still in test phase, will not see the light of day—at least not in the shape being discussed and constructed today, the more so given that Congress and House of Representatives are cutting funding for MD¹⁰—will turn out to be flawed or ineffective.

In its own right antimissile defence is generally deemed a promising solution to the problem of security guarantees for particular countries, regions and armed forces stationed in various areas. Thus, it ought to be treated as the most crucial strategic issue for the upcoming decades. In their security strategies, major international organizations have named the risk

of terrorist attack using missile-based weapons of mass destruction as the greatest—and universal—threat facing the global community. This danger has increased to the degree where in the foreseeable future countries now in possession of rockets and propulsion systems capable of firing them as far as 1,000-2,000 km may well acquire weapons with the range of approximately 3,000-4,000 or even 5,000 km and more. Such missiles will be more accurate and able to carry warheads equipped with various types of weapons of mass destruction. Extended range of ballistic missiles should become the starting point for deliberations over the purposefulness of participating in defence programmes which may permit shooting down a hostile rocket in a situation where both it and the antimissile are hurtling at each other at a speed of several kilometres per second.

According to estimates,¹¹ over 30 countries or groups with terrorist links now dispose of rockets of varying range, but of ever improving design. It is unlikely that at this stage Poland is threatened by such states or organizations, and so some people question the credibility of the argument that our country needs to defend itself against similar rocket threats, for instance from Iran. However, one cannot entirely preclude this possibility in the long run. Poland’s 2003 “National Security Strategy” states that “a number of countries are working on the construction of weapons of mass destruction and rocket systems which may, over the next few years, result in Polish territory’s falling into range of ballistic missiles from outside of Europe. This threat is increasing due to the ever more real possibility of such weapons falling into

⁹ Katarzyna Hołdak, “Amerykański system obrony przeciwrakietowej i jego implikacje dla Polski”, *Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe*, 1 – 2006/, Wydawnictwo BBN.

¹⁰ To approx. 600 mn dollars.

the hands terrorist of criminal organizations.”¹²
This observation¹³ may serve as the formal
premise to justify the decision on the shield.

Were one to assume—and this appears to be
the only rational option—that Poland ought not
to isolate itself from the mainstream of
international security policy, then from this
perspective it could be claimed that, despite
multifarious unknowns and provisos related to
the MD project in its political and military
aspects, Poland should lean towards
participation in the American project, on
favourable terms. As matters stand NATO and
EU projects, still in embryonic phase, do not
represent a viable alternative.

Given that details of the talks with the USA, the
exact location (somewhere in the vicinity of
Słupsk) and terms of the “Polish” MD
component’s deployment, and other relevant
data have hitherto not been disclosed, any
potential arguments for or against also appear
relative, at best.

Security above all

The most general, but at the same time
overriding question is whether, and to what
extent would locating an element of the
American system constitute value added to
Polish security as it stands at present (or as it is
likely to stand the nearest future). Formulated in
this manner, the query needs no additional
justification. For any country, external security is
a value in itself. The obverse of this question is

how great is the risk that our security shall be
diminished.

Poland’s decision to allow (or disallow) the
installation of the American antimissile shield to
proceed should be based on an objective
analysis of arguments in favour and those
against. However, in making it Poland ought
also to take heed that ever since the breakup of
the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact, through the
successful process of negotiating NATO
membership, engagement in Iraq and finally EU
accession, it has founded its security interests
principally on cooperation with the United
States.

For now this trend persists—irrespective of
whether the USA is viewed as an autonomous
agent, as NATO member with the greatest
political and military clout, or as the leading
force within a coalition of different states.
Whatever the interpretation, the glaring
asymmetry of power and import between the
United States and Poland engenders a certain
political and military dependence. Today, Poland
seems willing to accept this in the name of
increased security guarantees (which politicians
frequently do not try and hide, some even
expressing the desire for Poland to be treated
as the USA’s special partner).

However, a change in its political landscape
may provoke Poland to re-examine its approach
to the United States—the more so given that so
far in the negotiation process Washington has
not made any explicit promises (at least to
Polish public opinion) that could be construed as
indication of strengthened security guarantees.
This re-examination may take the form of certain
reserve towards the USA. Presumably,
deploying the antimissile system in Poland

¹¹ Cf. Subsequent editions of the SIPRI Yearbook.

¹² http://www.bbn.gov.pl/?strona=pl_dokument_strategia_bezpieczenstwa.

¹³ Work is in progress on the new *Strategy*.

without prior political and defence agreement would fail to win parliamentary approval—either before or after the October 21 election. Thus, agreement with the USA may well not be subject to ratification, but shall instead be adopted in another form. Yet that could leave unanswered the question of what needs to be done, and how, to ensure that in dislocating an antimissile base on Polish territory the United States does not treat our country instrumentally—simply as a good place to site its own defence system—but actually commits itself to supporting Poland's national defence system.

Before the most significant elements of the MD system are deployed on its territory, Poland needs to realize that this favours the development of American power—and ultimately its supremacy—on a global scale, with all the attendant positive, negative and controversial upshots. Analysis of America's superpower status falls outside the purview of the present study, but it may be worth knowing whether and to what extent a relationship exists between MD and the USA's claimed right to preemptive strike as one of the canons of America's national strategy (in previous versions and, even more emphatically, in its most recent incarnation dated March 16, 2006), potential offensive measures, direction of American armament, including its nuclear arsenal, the principle of deterrence, efficacy of the non-proliferation regime, American attitudes towards remaining actors (state and institutional) on the international security scene, especially Russia and China, and to its own, and its allies' interventionism. Professor Roman Kuźniar, director of Warsaw University's Department of Strategic Studies, has observed that “there

appears the question of absolute security of the sole superpower, which may lead to the sense of impunity ('whatever I do, no one will be able to punish me'), as lucidly illustrated by the war in Iraq, based as it was on faulty premises.”¹⁴

Does the USA's and Poland's broad aim of combating international terrorism suffice to balance any potential losses resulting from Polish support for the American venture?

An important element that needs to be considered when analysing the possibility of accepting MD elements on its territory is Poland's continued involvement in various international initiatives aimed at halting proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, such as the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) or the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) inspired by the American president, as well as myriad other forms of international cooperation. In this respect, acquiescence in the deployment of MD may be regarded as an extension of the WMD non-proliferation drive.

Value Added

The question about value added for Polish security from installing an American facility on our territory thus appears to be essentially tantamount to the question about American involvement in matters of Polish security, were it to be breached by some other state or non-state external entity.

This outlook may suggest that Poland is not satisfied with the present and forecast state of NATO and other security related institutions, with the credibility of and readiness to stand by security guarantees enshrined in Article V of the

¹⁴ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 6, 2005.

Washington Treaty.¹⁵ Witold Waszczykowski, undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Poland's chief negotiator, noted that "dreams of the post cold war peace dividend were dashed as early as in the 1990s. We are dealing with a renationalisation of certain countries' foreign and security policy, frequently even within the transatlantic community. There exist evident examples of renouncing the principle of transatlantic and European solidarity, even among EU member states, and thus we could in fact be justified in our anxiety that institutions we belong to which should guard us against security threats may fail authentically to implement the security mechanism. We also see certain organizations of which Poland is a member as permitting situations whereby a peculiar sort of political correctness insists on a specific tone of conversation, or block discussion of certain international threats and the directions these may take... NATO has not updated its contingency plans for years. This means that Poland must remember about further strengthening the organization responsible for international security, at the same time bearing in mind that we may need to shore up the mechanisms we find flawed and which might not work."¹⁶

Polish subject literature¹⁷ and debates attended by politicians, parliamentarians and pundits (such as those hosted by Center for International Relations, Polish Institute for

International Affairs, Institute for Strategic Studies, Euro-Atlantic Association) provide numerous examples of assertions and allusions evincing a similar take on the problem, in other words assessment of the antimissile shield project not only as important with regard to American interests and the war on terror, but also as "supplementing" the security guarantees the West has pledged to Poland in the face of an as yet unspecified but real threat to our country (purportedly) from the east. (One problem for Polish security policy is that our threat perceptions differ from those of many western states.)

Siting one element of the antimissile shield, necessarily accompanied by stationing American personnel (probably around 300 soldiers) and building the requisite military infrastructure in a given area would not just involve the USA in Poland or Czech Republic but, more broadly, in Central Europe (compared with progressive reduction in the number of "traditional" bases in Western Europe).

This ought to suit Poland, given two things. First, American military and political involvement in Europe needs to continue, albeit according to a modified formula. One of the hallmarks of Polish security policy after 1989 is the sustained interest in American presence on our continent, regarded as a stabilizing force in our closest vicinity. At this juncture, however, it needs to be said that this postulate has hitherto appeared only in the context of American presence in Western Europe, for obvious reasons. Now, paradoxically, doubts are being voiced that installing MD elements may place Poland at risk of a retaliatory strike, while at the same time the

¹⁵ Cf. Report from the "NATO and Article V" conference organized by the Center for International Relations on March 8, 2007.

http://www.csm.org.pl/pl/files/seminar/2007/Sprawozdanie_Nato_Artyku%B3_v.pdf

¹⁶ Cf. A statement by Witold Waszczykowski at the "American antimissile shield and Polish national interest" conference organized by the Batory Foundation on August 7, 2006. <http://www.batory.org.pl/doc/tarcza-antyrakietowa.pdf>.

¹⁷ See references in the present text.

deployment of NATO infrastructure is perceived as an additional security guarantee.

In black and white

Thus it may be apt to ask whether increased American involvement in Polish security if Poland were to consent to the deployment of an MD component could be set in stone, since for some time now (beginning with the Iraq venture) the USA has been perceived as the country's ultimate protector, albeit without any formally binding obligations?

Any agreement with the United States ought to comprehensively secure Poland's political, military and economic interests. This means that—optimally—the agreement should make references to American engagement in Polish security, guarantee that the entire enterprise is transparent to the Polish authorities, clearly delineate the remit of US and Polish jurisdiction paying heed to the Polish legal system and NATO's SOFA regulations,¹⁸ determine how the Americans plan to finance the base itself and what are their plans as regards the local infrastructure.

It may be largely up to Poland whether or not the agreement with the USA remains just a “modest” legal-technical document, limited to the narrowly construed domain of military cooperation, or becomes a significant treaty with clear political overtones. Were collaboration with the United States presented to Poles¹⁹ and our

allies in too unconvincing a manner, to many it may well become a virtue in itself obscuring the necessary weighing of Poland's own interests in security and defence policy.

In return for consenting to MD deployment, Poland would like such a broad agreement on political and military cooperation which would envisage a transfer of installations directly contributing to Polish security, and not solely that of the American base. The following options are being floated:

- deployment in Poland²⁰ of NATO's Allied Ground Surveillance (AGS) base,²¹ which requires American approval;
- deployment of over a dozen air defence systems for short- and midrange rockets fired from relatively close by, e.g. mobile “Patriot” batteries (PAC-III) capable of taking out hostile missiles in re-entry stage, to defend the most crucial sites and troops on foreign missions;
- in future, deployment of longer range mobile THAAD systems for short- and midrange rockets coming in from the east.

The local community is particularly concerned about how the antimissile base (approx. 300 hectares), with its attendant infrastructure, will affect the region's economy, but also about its possible environmental impact. The greatest political hurdle may prove to be the matter of the so-called exterritoriality, though a US representative seems to have suggested that this issue had already been resolved, with the

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ According to various studies over 50 percent of Poles oppose the Shield. Cf. results of Polish opinion polls on the topic of deploying elements of the antimissile shield in our country, available from CIR: <http://www.csm.org.pl/images/rte/File/Raporty%20i%20publikacje/Inne/Poland%20Missile%20Defense%20Study.ppt>. The poll was commissioned by Missile Defence Advocacy

Alliance, an American nongovernmental organization (<http://www.missiledefenceadvocacy.org>).

²⁰ In Powidz, close to Poznań.

²¹ Cf. minutes from the Euro-Atlantic Association conference available at <http://www.sea-ngo.org>.

United States accepting that the area remain under Polish jurisdiction.²² Similarly, Americans appear to have agreed to finance the construction and maintenance of the base. The legal minutiae are to be elaborated in a number of agreements, including NATO's tried-and-tested Standing of Forces Agreement (SOFA).²³ One of the more interesting aspects is certainly the ultimate decision-making procedure for launching the antimissiles. Not just political factors, but also the need for immediate reaction to threats the MD system is set to counter (with reaction times of 2-12 minutes) may mean that direct command remains wholly in American hands, though a Polish-American liaison team may be put in place.

Poland in crosshairs?

Despite advanced stages of negotiations one question persists: is the antimissile shield the best guarantee for a binding American engagement in Polish security, since its very existence might in fact provoke a potential enemy to undertake offensive actions? Another is whether Poland—as an ally who accepts American presence on its territory—is going to be drawn into conflict with a state or states, for instance Iran, disposing of rockets which the MD system is designed to deal with and at the same time hostile towards Iraq, where Poland is part of the stabilization forces.

Political and military risk, even of the direct sort, linked to the deployment doubtless exists. Any important military installation may be seen as a provocation. Any country on whose territory

such venture takes place, and all its citizens are exposed to the threat of attack. General Bolesław Balcerowicz, a renowned strategist, opined that "Polish participation in the antimissile shield project shall not have any direct bearing on our security—which will be indirectly strengthened by the closer ties to the United States, but which will also make Poland a target."²⁴ He does not regard the shield as a global defence system, but as one with a specific master and a particular area to protect that does not necessarily cover Poland and Europe. Such risk is augmented further wherever American installations are involved, given may organizations' and milieus' hostility or even overt hatred towards the superpower.

Many analysts' suggestions of high likelihood of terrorist attack linked to the construction of an American military facility in Poland is not without justification. However, the magnitude of risk appears lower when considering American bases in NATO countries in Europe or other US allies elsewhere in the world, principally in Japan, where they are protected by ancillary systems, than in the case of temporary military installations accompanying a military intervention, such as those in Iraq or Afghanistan. American bases in Europe, established after the Second World War, have never been targeted. Any US base in Poland would be exceedingly well protected and—essentially—would be subject to agreement with Polish authorities. Meanwhile, a risk certainly exists of a terrorist attack against Poland, not so much due to the presence of an American installation, but as a consequence of the country's pro-American stance evinced *inter alia*

²² In a statement by Daniel Fried, State Department official responsible for Central European relations, for TVN24 on September 9, 2007.

²³ http://www.bbn.gov.pl/?strona=pl_nato_sofa-pdp

by the very consent to its construction. As such, Poland certainly belongs to the “risk group”. Analysis of terrorist strikes in countries participating in the American-lead coalition implies that Poland is its sole important member to have thus far avoided attack.

Russian criticism

Plans to dislocate the MD component on Polish territory carry with them the risk connected with America’s fraught relationship with Russia, and tensions between Russia and Poland, though the latter rapport differs qualitatively from the former.

Washington and Moscow will inexorably find a shared *modus vivendi*. Moscow would probably retract its manifest objections to MD’s deployment in Poland (and Czech Republic) on the condition that this would proceed in a manner that is “transparent” to the Russians. This could mean Russia’s receiving certain information pertaining to the system’s purpose, its role in future US defence strategy, the base itself and its attendant military infrastructure and, to a certain extent, missile launch procedures. It might even involve actual Russian inspection of the facility. Such a hypothesis was lent currency last year.²⁵

What appears to be another step towards a US-Russia agreement is America’s provisional agreement to incorporate a post-soviet base in Azerbaijan into the MD system, which would permit Russia, which is in the process of

refurbishing its anti-ballistic missile defences, to participate in America’s global system.²⁶

American-Russian MD consultations may even constitute a mutually desirable starting point for dialogue on arms control in the new international security environment. This notion is corroborated by the double track nature of the Russian stance. On the one hand, there are enunciations about “adequate measures” Russia will take in response, i.e. threatening to withdraw from the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (which would pose to challenge above all to Europe),²⁷ hinting at possible revision of Russian approach to the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty which reduces the number of short- and midrange missiles in Europe, moving missile launch platforms closer to the Polish border (in the Kaliningrad district), installing RS-24 (“Iskander”) intercontinental ballistic missiles, or even instigating a new arms race.²⁸ Such declarations, coming from president Vladimir Putin himself, foreign and defence ministers, Russia’s military establishment, especially Yuri Baluyevsky, Chief of General Staff, and influential parliamentarians, such as Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of Duma’s Committee for International Affairs, are founded on the assumption that the American system in Poland (and Czech Republic) will also target Russia. Russian

²⁴ PAP, November 14, 2004.

²⁵ More precisely, since Sergei Ivanov, the Russian Federation’s defence minister, paid a visit to Donald Rumsfeld, the then American defence secretary, on August 28, 2006, followed by Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov’s visit to Warsaw on October 4-5, 2006, when the Russians were promised transparency in this domain.

²⁶ On June 7, 2007 in Heiligendam President Putin presented George Bush with the offer to utilize the Russian-leased Gabala radar base, located some 180 km from Iranian border, instead of building one in Czech Republic, and to deploy antimissiles in Turkey or Iraq rather than in Poland.

²⁷ “Russia suspends Participation in Key Arms Treaty”, July 14, 2007, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2007/07/mil-070714-rferl01.htm>

²⁸ At the same time, another idea was propounded to use intermediate range missiles eliminated by the INF accord for precision preventive strikes, as also discussed by American and Russian defence ministers on August 28, 2006.

analyses and statements suggest that ballistic missiles launched from such a site could hit targets in Russia's European regions, making Europe America's new frontier.

One weighty counterargument Moscow invokes against the planned MD deployment is that the USA would thus breach the extant arms control regime and hamper international efforts to cooperate on antimissile defence. America's withdrawal in mid 2002 from the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, signed in 1972 and essential in maintaining the strategic balance between the two superpowers during the cold war and in the years following its end, has for some time been viewed in Moscow as the first step towards expanding the US antimissile system and attaining strategic advantage over Russia. It appears that Russian objections are not actually aimed at the MD system as such, but rather constitute an expression of anxiety over Russia's ever diminishing role on the global arena, for obvious reasons passing over the modernization of Russian missile potential.²⁹

On the other hand, however, every threat uttered by Russia is accompanied by a conciliatory offer of cooperation with the Americans (though not with Poles), in general implying room for compromise. This will probably be the case with the antimissile defence, but it may also encompass other spheres of security policy in the nascent network of future international relations, in particular those involving the USA, Russia, China, India and other Far East countries.

All the while, Russia's negative reactions to the planned MD deployment is directed at Poland (and Czech Republic) and may well escalate,

shifting to extramilitary domains—though here rhetoric must always be distinguished from actual politics.

Russia is traditionally opposed to foreign military infrastructure being deployed near its borders, or those of the Commonwealth of Independent States, with the history of NATO enlargement to include Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and the Baltic States providing ample evidence of such reactions. With time Russian objections disappeared and Russia began to cooperate with the Atlantic Alliance. Przemysław Grudziński, military expert and Poland's erstwhile ambassador to Washington, was right in saying that "it was Russian resistance to NATO enlargement that caused the Alliance to declare in 1999 that it is not planning to build any bases or station NATO troops on Czech, Hungarian or Polish territory. Although in the case of MDI the base would be American, and not NATO's, but to Russian eyes this would constitute not circumventing that declaration but its outright breach. Still, a long time has passed since the statement was made. Yevgeny Primakov, the then Russian foreign minister, thought Poland joining NATO as crossing the line. Later this line came to be identified with the Baltic States' accession to the Alliance. The Kremlin would probably view constructing MDI in Poland as yet again taking one step too many, though the line no longer seems quite as sharp."³⁰

The plan to deploy an element of MD in Poland may incessantly be treated as a pretext to lay on our country the blame for stagnating Polish-Russian relations and stoking anti-Russian psychosis. The shield deployment issue may

²⁹ SS-24 rockets to replace SS-18s and SS-19s.

³⁰ In an interview for *Gazeta Wyborcza* (November 2005).

possibly delay the Russian decision to continue high level political talks. Those involving foreign ministers (which took place and are set to resume) seem to have been deferred until future policy towards the USA is elaborated, while those between defence ministers are yet to commence. Deepening the political crisis in relations with Moscow is not in Poland's interest—either for bilateral reasons, or in view of the situation whereby permanent conflict gives rise to a clear disproportion between the state of Russia's relations with the west as a whole, and the USA in particular, and that of our bilateral relations.

Several questions emerge in Polish public debate. To what extent ought the shield issue to be perceived simply as an element of the rapport between the MD system's true master, i.e. the United States, and to what extent does should it impact Polish-Russian relations. This ineluctable dilemma is another reason why Poland should regard the antimissile system in the broader context of transatlantic and European security.

In concert with allies

The MD system, brainchild of the USA, indubitably NATO's most important member, is being constructed outside of the North Atlantic Alliance. From a formal legal perspective the putative Polish-American military and political agreement will be bilateral.

This assumption, adopted at the very outset of consultations between the United States and Poland over the missile shield, should not undermine the sense of America's and Poland's relations with NATO as a bloc, which in practice

comes down to the two countries rapport with NATO's European members—this would not be in either party's interest. Yet it did—the shield issue initially provoked a serious conflict between Washington and Brussels, while Polish government's anticipated consent to the construction of the interceptor missile base (and Czechs' espousal of the radar base idea) met with disapproval. Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, NATO secretary general, criticized the American project for damaging fundamental principles of NATO as an organization for mutual defence, one of the preeminent aspects of the North Atlantic Alliance's *raison d'être*.

For Poland one weighty argument in favour of forging links with the American system—besides the political premises (mentioned in part one of the present analysis)—was the American proposal's technological and conceptual lead over its NATO equivalent. While the shape of MD has already been defined, NATO is only now producing analyses whether and to what extent an antimissile system to protect not just troops but also (or above all) allied territories, could be implemented. In late 2006, after four years' worth of work on the so-called Feasibility Study, NATO decided that the antimissile system is "feasible".³¹ Progress on analyses of political and military consequences for NATO of antimissile defence and the Alliance's preparedness to construct the system may be ready for assessment at the NATO summit in Bucharest in February 2008 at the earliest. Still, precisely for reasons of security policy (security guarantees, economic and technical support) Poland ought to actively advocate far reaching cooperation between the USA and NATO on

matters of missile defence. Throughout the negotiations it should adopt the policy of “covering fire”, simultaneously striving to enliven NATO and EU activities in various domains and to inform its European partners about progress of the American venture to the extent that Poland is involved. For a long time it has failed to do so, despite experts’ suggestions. “Although the United States is Poland’s most important ally, it is not the only one. Strong security ties also bind us with European states (through NATO and the EU’s nascent security and defence policy). Poland should by no means hope for the weakening or relaxing these relation, which is why any deliberations on potential Polish involvement in MD should take into account this broad European perspective. What does this mean in practice? When negotiating with Americans Poland should first and foremost insist that the shield acquire “allied” character,” wrote Beata Górka-Winter, to name but one analyst.³²

Polish response came tardily and could be treated as derivative of the USA’s rapprochement with NATO over the antimissile system. For Washington has begun clearly to underscore that the shield’s European pillar, to wit the installations in Poland and Czech Republic, is not only to defend the United States but also these two countries,³³ as well as other Central European states, Germany, Baltic States and even northern Russia. Other countries most exposed to possible attacks (Italy, Turkey, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Ukraine and Moldova) ought to be

protected by NATO’s short and intermediate range missiles.³⁴ As a result of the Americans’ admittedly consistent policy NATO American system, accepting that the USA should proceed with building the shield.³⁵

Poland ultimately put forward the issue of linking the shield with NATO defence planning.

Although most EU member states do not want MD components to be deployed on our continent, they are not opposed to the idea of a missile defence system. Several groups of states are tracking ballistic missile movements in partnership with the United States. Close American allies include the United Kingdom, Denmark, which remains outside the EU’s common foreign and security policy, largely due to the benefits it reaps from close cooperation with the superpower, and Norway, which is not in fact an EU member. In view of Poland’s good political relations and military cooperation with these countries, it is worthwhile to learn from their experiences, both military and those

³³ Cf. Statement by the chief of the Missile Defence Agency at the CIR conference in Warsaw on April 18, 2007, at www.csm.org.pl.

³⁴ Both the United States and NATO have declared the desire to defend allied forces deployed on missions outside NATO’s treaty area against rocket attacks. Having concluded that MD remains an illusory solution where defence of contingents is concerned, given its ability to shoot down enemy missiles only in the middle stage of flight when there is most time to react, a pundit at a military weekly posed the following question: “should we be vying for a weapon that will prove redundant for a decade or two in a situation where we are unable to provide our contingents with antimissile defence?” (Artur Goławski “Strategiczny dylemat”, *Polska Zbrojna*, 47/2005). He goes on to ask: “Perhaps we should not enter Uncle Sam’s strategic system, but wait instead for NATO’s operational-tactical ALTBMD (Active Layered Theater Ballistic Missile Defence), which is set to protect troops on foreign missions against short and midrange missile threats around 2010? Joining ALTBMD would have the advantage of not antagonizing our NATO allies.” In essence, ALTBMD boils down to creating a system that would integrate extant air defence systems, actually constructed in cooperation with major NATO powers. Poland is not at present participating in this venture.

³⁵ At the North Atlantic Council meeting in Brussels, on April 19, 2007.

³¹ Riga NATO Summit Final Declaration, pt. 25, November 29, 2006.

³² *Rzeczpospolita*, February 27, 2006.

pertaining to legal regulations, underlying their partnership with the United States.

Therefore, the problem (in this and many other domains of EU policy) does not come down to America's stark unilateralism, putatively contrary to European interests. No less of a worry is the continued lack of a European policy that would permit the implementation of effective projects (which is not to say ones identical to what the USA is suggesting). This means that the European Union is not, at least for now, about to reach a consensus on issues such as shielding Europe's territory and does not possess the technology which would allow the realization of large programmes of this type. Were one to assume, as we have done in the introduction, that antimissile defence is set to remain one of the key topics in global security policy, then the EU, if it wants to undertake joint efforts in this domain, will need to decide whether it will strive to construct its own (autonomous?) system or work in tandem with the United States.

Antimissile defence is becoming one of the most important themes in transatlantic relations.

Conclusions

To recap, it appears that:

1. In deciding whether to allow the deployment of an element of the American antimissile shield in our country important role shall be played by specifically Polish thinking in geopolitical terms and the wish to secure additional protection against potential threats (independent of NATO guarantees).
2. In consenting to the deployment of an MD component Poland would be making a strategic choice, not just given the nature of the planned installation, which is to serve the universal purpose of contemporary security policy, i.e. countering rocket attacks by terrorist groups, but above all because of the repercussions ensuing from tying its security with that of the USA. Poland has always based its security interests on cooperation with the United States and the latter's presence in Europe. Present and future cooperation with the USA will determine whether or not Poland will ultimately accept the American project, given of course that the United States will ultimately decide to deploy the MD element in our country.
3. Because of the MD system's relevance and the United States' role in the broad international situation over many years to come, cooperating with the USA would doubtless entail long term positive and negative consequences for our country's security and defence. Thus there is no unequivocal answer to the question of whether constructing a MD element on Polish territory is justified, and especially whether it is in Poland's security interests. However, neither is there a better guarantee to secure ourselves against a possible strike. For years Poland has conducted a policy aimed at non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

4. In view of the above, and despite numerous unknowns and reservations stemming from the MD project in its political and military dimensions, Poland ought to lean towards participation in the American project, on favourable conditions. Policy oriented towards cooperation with the USA need not mean unconditional agreement to the deployment and this provides room for manoeuvre in talks with the United States.
5. Locating a component of the American system should above all provide value added to the current (or foreseeable) state of Polish security. Agreement with the USA ought to secure Polish political, military and economic interests in as broad a manner as possible. This means that optimally the agreement should contain references to American involvement in Polish security, guarantee a high degree of

transparency of the entire venture to the Polish authorities, clearly delineate the remit of US and Polish jurisdiction, paying heed to the Polish legal framework and NATO's SOFA regulations, and provide for an advantageous division of the financial burden of constructing and maintaining the base and its attendant infrastructure. In the name of what is seen as the greater good (US security guarantees) will not make onerous demands, though this may elicit censure from large swathes of the society.

NATO's embryonic antimissile defence programme does not represent a viable alternative for Poland, which should nonetheless actively support increased collaboration with NATO as a whole, speak out in favour of US-NATO partnership and shore up the European Union in its efforts to construct a common foreign, security and defence policy.

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